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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/642,227	08/21/2000	Yuji Shimizu	250419US2X	7672
22850 7590 04/03/2009 OBLON, SPIVAK, MCCLELLAND MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C. 1940 DUKE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314			EXAMINER PORTER, RACHEL L	
			ART UNIT 3626	PAPER NUMBER
			NOTIFICATION DATE 04/03/2009	DELIVERY MODE ELECTRONIC

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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Office Action Summary	Application No. 09/642,227	Applicant(s) SHIMIZU, YUJI	
	Examiner RACHEL L. PORTER	Art Unit 3626	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 19 December 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 30-55 and 58-111 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 58-111 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 30-55 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Notice to Applicant

1. This communication is in response to the amendment filed 4/29/08 . Claims 1-111 are pending. Claims 58-111 have been withdrawn from consideration as being drawn to non-elected invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

2. The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

3. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

4. Claims 30-55 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claims 30, currently recite the phrase “displaying an input screen into which into which the customers input, opinion information....”

However, while the current claim language recites displaying an inquiry screen, it does not positively recite of a step of inputting opinion information into the inquiry screen. In particular, the claim does not recite a step of:

It is therefore unclear whether the step of inputting information into the displayed inquiry input screen is actually performed as a part of the Applicant's invention. (i.e. lies within the metes and bounds of the Applicant's invention.)

Claim 30 recites the limitation "receiving ...*the* opinion information input by the customers." There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim. The claim does not recite a step of "inputting opinion information by the customers."

Also, Claim 55 recites the limitation "inputting ...*the* opinion information...." There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim. The claim does not previously recite a step of opinion information.

Claims 30 and 55 have been amended to recite "drafting new merchandise using a CAD device..." There is insufficient antecedent basis for the limitation "CAD" in the claims. It is respectfully requested that when using an acronym, the applicant uses the full-term, the first time the term is referenced in the claim. For the purpose of applying art, the Examiner will interpret CAD as "computer-aided design."

Dependent claims 31-54 inherit the deficiencies of independent claim 30, and are therefore also rejected.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

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(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. Claims 30-33 and 55 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow (USPN 5,999,908) in view of Sammon, Jr. (USPN 6,012,051).

[claim 30] Abelow teaches a merchandise planning and development method comprising:

a merchandise planning information notice step of informing many and unspecified customers of merchandise planning and development information relating to relating to design specifications new merchandise in a development period and until before the new merchandise is manufactured; (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a display step of displaying, at the side of the customer, the merchandise planning and development information, including a preview design, (col. 12, lines 35-35-42: product development and prototype product information feedback track from customers) received from the merchandise notice unit, the display step further displaying an inquiry input screen for allowing the customers to input opinion information not on use of any actual product by the customers but on the merchandise planning and development information (Figures 24-25, 30A, 33A, col. 32, lines 51-67; col. 69, lines 21-31) wherein the opinion information is inputted based on displayed merchandise planning and development information prior to use of the new merchandise, wherein the inquiry input screen is displayed after the preview design is displayed (col. 48, lines 32-42; col. 77, lines 10-15—system accepts customer feedback

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regarding information and improvements on products before product new merchandise is used) ,

receiving the opinion information input by the customers (col. 12, lines 35-42; col. 32, lines 51-67)

an opinion information collecting step for collecting the received opinion information input by customers; and (col. 12, lines 35-35-42; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

drafting an improved design of the new merchandise using a CAD device, based on an improved specification of the new merchandise determined according to an analysis of the opinion information collected; and (col. 77, lines 51-67)

a merchandise information notice step informing the customers of information on the improved design of the merchandise. (see abstract; col. 12, lines 20-col. 13, line 2; col. 16, lines 9-60; col. 18, lines 63-col. 20, lines 30; col. 69, lines 17-60)

Abelow discloses a system wherein information is input when an inquiry screen prompts/requests the data from a user based upon the requirements of the merchandise planning and development process (Abelow: Figures 24-25, col. 32, lines 51-67) Furthermore, the system accepts customer feedback regarding information and improvements on products before product new merchandise is used. (col. 48, lines 32-42; col. 77, lines 10-15)

Claim 30 also recites that the data is transmitted/received via the Internet.

Abelow does not expressly disclose how data is transmitted (e.g. via the internet), but

does disclose that the Internet is a relevant digital environment for the disclosed invention. (col. 85, lines 20-32)

Sammon, Jr. discloses a system for gathering and processing consumer opinions on products, wherein data is transmitted and received over the Internet. (Sammon: col. 5, lines 2-10) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow with the teaching of Sammon to transmit and receive data over the Internet. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature so that users could link to relevant data and resources regardless of the location of the data worldwide. (Abelow: col. 86, lines 35-47)

Claim 30 further recites "displaying an inquiry input screen into which the customers input, opinion information, prior to manufacture of the new merchandise, not on use of any product the new merchandise by the customers, but on the merchandise planning and development information, wherein the opinion information is inputted based on the displayed merchandise planning and development information in the development period of the new merchandise." It should be noted that information describing the type of information displayed is considered to be non-functional descriptive material.

For example, the opinion information is described as being "prior to manufacture of the new merchandise, not on use of any product the new merchandise by the customers, but on the merchandise planning and development information, wherein the opinion information is inputted based on the displayed merchandise planning and

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development information in the development period of the new merchandise." In particular, these limitations are nonfunctional description material and are not functionally involved in the steps recited. The steps recited in the claim would be performed the same regardless of the data contents noted material. Thus, this descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art in terms of patentability. See *In re Gulack*, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994).

A similar may be applied to the details describing "the information relating to the specifications of the new merchandise of in a development period...until before the new merchandise is manufactured.

[claims 31-33] Abelow teaches a method of surveying the popularity of various products at various stages of the product life cycle, including product launch (i.e. trial product) (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34; col. 18, lines 63-col. 19, lines 49, Figures 16, 22-24). Abelow further discloses that the system provides information on a plurality of new/prototype (i.e. trial) products. (abstract, col. 19, line 42-col. 20, line 31- provides support and information on new development on product throughout product life cycle)

[claim 55] Abelow teaches merchandise planning and development method comprising:

a merchandise planning information notice step of informing many and unspecified customers of merchandise planning and development information relating to design specifications of a plurality of new merchandise on the basis of one concept in a development period ; (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a displaying step of displaying, at a side of the customer, the merchandise planning and development information including a preview design, (col. 12, lines 35-35-42: product development and prototype product information feedback track from customers)received, the display step further displaying an inquiry input screen for allowing the customers to input opinion information not on use of any actual product by the customers but on the merchandise planning and development information on the merchandise planning and development information (Figures 24-25, 30A, 33A, col. 69, lines 21-31) wherein the opinion information is inputted based on displayed merchandise planning and development information in the development period of the plurality of new merchandise. (col. 48, lines 32-42; col. 77, lines 10-15—system accepts customer feedback regarding information and improvements on products before product new merchandise is used), wherein the inquiry input screen is displayed after the preview design is displayed (col. 48, lines 32-42; col. 77, lines 10-15—system accepts customer feedback regarding information and improvements on products before product new merchandise is used),

inputting, into the inquiry input screen, the opinion information prior to use of the new merchandise; (col. 48, lines 32-42; col. 77, lines 10-15—system accepts

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customer feedback regarding information and improvements on products before product new merchandise is used),

receiving the opinion information input by the customers (col. 32, lines 51-67)

an opinion information collecting step of collecting the received opinion information input by customers; and (col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

drafting an improved design of the new merchandise using a CAD device, based on an improved specification of the new merchandise determined according to an analysis of the opinion information collected; and (col. 77, lines 51-67)

a merchandise information notice step informing the customers of information on the improved design of the merchandise. (see abstract; col. 12, lines 20-col. 13, line 2; col. 16, lines 9-60; col. 18, lines 63-col. 20, lines 30; col. 69, lines 17-60)

Abelow discloses a system wherein information is input when an inquiry screen prompts/requests the data from a user based upon the requirements of the merchandise planning and development process (Abelow: Figures 24-25, col. 32, lines 51-67) Furthermore, the system accepts customer feedback regarding information and improvements on products before product new merchandise is used. (col. 48, lines 32-42; col. 77, lines 10-15)

Claim 55 further recites that the data is transmitted/received via the Internet. Abelow does not expressly disclose how data is transmitted (e.g. via the internet), but does disclose that the Internet is a relevant digital environment for the disclosed invention. (col. 85, lines 20-32)

Sammon, Jr. discloses a system for gathering and processing consumer opinions on products, wherein data is transmitted and received over the Internet. (Sammon: col. 5, lines 2-10) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow with the teaching of Sammon to transmit and receive data over the Internet. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature so that users could link to relevant data and resources regardless of the location of the data worldwide. (Abelow: col. 86, lines 35-47)

Claim 55 has been amended to currently recite "displaying an inquiry input screen into which the customers input, opinion information, prior to manufacture of the new merchandise, not on use of any product the new merchandise by the customers, but on the merchandise planning and development information, wherein the opinion information is inputted based on the displayed merchandise planning and development information in the development period of the new merchandise." It should be noted that information describing the type of information displayed is considered to be non-functional descriptive material.

For example, the opinion information is described as being "prior to manufacture of the new merchandise, not on use of any product the new merchandise by the customers, but on the merchandise planning and development information, wherein the opinion information is inputted based on the displayed merchandise planning and development information in the development period of the new merchandise." In particular, these limitations are nonfunctional description material and are not

functionally involved in the steps recited. The steps recited in the claim would be performed the same regardless of the data contents noted material. Thus, this descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art in terms of patentability. See *In re Gulack*, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994).

A similar may be applied to the details describing “the information relating to the specifications of the new merchandise of in a development period...until before the new merchandise is manufactured.

7. Claims 34,35,37,39, and 43-50 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow and Sammon as applied to claims 1 and 30, and in further view of Murcko, Jr. (USPN 6,578,014).

[claims 34,35,37, and 39] Abelow teaches the merchandise planning and development method that operates via the internet as explained in the rejection of claim 30 above, but does not expressly disclose that the method includes the use of a sales booking unit and a price determining unit. However, Abelow does consider pricing information in determining which factors will improve product sales (col. 87, lines 55-56). Murcko teaches a merchandise planning and development method further comprising,

a sales booking step of accepting sales reservation of merchandise to be released/sold corresponding to the merchandise information from said many and unspecified customers though the Internet; and (Figure 12, col. 12, lines 2-27)

a selling price determining step of determining the selling price of the new merchandise based on various market factors, including bidding and auction results (Fig. 12, col. 7, lines 40-60; col. 8, lines 43-67; col. 28, lines 1-30)

At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow with the teaching of Murcko to accept sales reservations and to allow for fluctuations in pricing depending upon various market conditions. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include these features to ensure that the manufacturer of a particular product outperforms competitors. (Abelow: Figure 16; col. 42, lines 33-39)

[claims 43-46] Abelow and Sammon in combination teach an Internet-implemented merchandise planning and development method as previously explained. Furthermore, Abelow discloses a system and method wherein vendors and customers are interconnected, and wherein data (including orders) are transmitted across various types of networks. (col. 9, lines 47-60; col. 41, lines 35-56) However, Abelow and Sammon do not expressly do not disclose the use of a sales-booking unit and the transmission of reservation data from the sales booking unit. Murcko teaches a system/method using a sales booking unit for accepting sales reservation of merchandise to be released/sold corresponding to the merchandise information and wherein customers and sellers transmit sales reservation data over a network (i.e. the Internet) (Figure 12; col. 12, lines 2-27). At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the

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method/system of Abelow and Sammon in combination with the teachings of Murcko to include the use of a sales booking unit and the transmission of reservation data from the sales booking unit. As suggested by Murcko, one would have been motivated to include these features to provide an efficient pricing system and to encourage free market transactions, which may not otherwise occur (col. 7, lines 41-45)

[claims 47-50] Abelow teaches a system that allows the users to customize various product components. (col. 27, line 65-col. 28, line 67; col. 35, line 64-col. 37, line 19) Abelow further discloses a system that operates via the Internet and includes a display unit as explained in the rejection of claims 30. Abelow is silent as to whether the (customized component) display unit displays a reservation acceptance screen for allowing the customers to input information on reservations of new merchandise, as the amended claims currently recite. Murcko teaches a system that includes a customized display component, which displays a reservation acceptance screen and allows customers to input information on reservations of new merchandise. (Figures 17-18, col. 27, line 20-col. 28, line 36) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the system of Abelow with the teaching Murcko to include a custom display unit that displays reservation acceptance information. As indicated by Murcko, one would have been motivated to include this feature to provide an electronic message that constitutes a statement of intent, which accurately reflects the customer's interests (col. 3, lines 16-39)

8. Claims 36,38, and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko, Jr. and in further view of Palmer ("Fancy Labels, Plain Prices")

[claims 36,38, and 40] Abelow, Sammon and Murcko teach a merchandise planning and development method including a price-determining step, which is sensitive to market factors as explained. Furthermore, Murcko discloses the use of discount in a pricing system (col. 28, lines 61-65), but Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not specifically disclose that the selling price determining step sets discount rate so that the discount rate of the fixed price gradually increases over time (i.e. the fixed price gradually reduces), and determines the selling price according to the discount rate. Palmer discloses selling method/system whereby the discount rate of a fixed price gradually increases the longer the merchandise remains in stock and wherein the fixed price is based upon the discount. (page 18, tag inset; page 20, paragraph 20) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow, Sammon and Murcko in combination with the teachings of Palmer to have the selling price determining step include increasing the discount rate of merchandise the longer it remains in stock and determining the selling price based upon this discount rate. As suggested by Palmer, one would have been motivated to include this feature to encourage the rapid sale/turn-over of merchandise. (Palmer: page. 20, par. 20)

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9. Claims 41-42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko, and in further view of Barzalai (USPN 6,012,045) [claim 41] Abelow and Sammon in combination teach a merchandise planning and development system that operates via the internet as explained in the rejection of claim 30, but Abelow does not expressly disclose that the system includes a price determining unit. However, Abelow does consider pricing information in determining which factors will improve product sales. (Abelow: col. 87, lines 55-56).

Murcko teaches a system further comprising a selling price determining unit for determining the selling price of the merchandise based on various market factors (Fig. 12, col. 7, lines 40-60; col. 8, lines 65-col. 9, line 9; col. 28, lines 1-30). At the time of the Applicant's invention, would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the system of Abelow and Sammon in combination with the teaching of Murcko. As suggested by Murcko, one would have been motivated to include these features to provide an efficient pricing system and to encourage free market transactions, which may not otherwise occur (col. 7, lines 41-45)

Abelow, Sammon and Murcko in combination teach a merchandise planning and development system including a price-determining unit, which is sensitive to market factors as explained above. Furthermore, Murcko discloses that the pricing system/method may be used in combination with other pricing mechanisms such as retail or auctioning systems (col. 8, lines 63-col. 9, line1), but Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not specifically disclose the details of bid collecting and further do not disclose that the method evaluates bid distributions.

Barzalai discloses system for collecting bids and auctioning merchandise comprising:

a bidding price collecting step of collecting the bidding prices of new merchandise to be released corresponding to the merchandise information from said many and unspecified customers; and (Figure 5; col. 12, lines 39-45; col. 13, lines 8-25)

a step of investigating the distribution of bidding prices on the basis of the result of collection of said bidding price collecting step and determining the selling price of the new merchandise on the basis of the bidding price zone of the greatest number of bids. (col. 13, lines 8-25; col. 16, lines 24-45—e.g. determines when, where, and which price ranges are most popular and allows these factors to influence sales/winning bid decisions)

At the time of the Applicant's invention it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the method of Abelow, Sammon, Murcko in combination with the teaching of Barzalai. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include these features to include benchmarking probes to help vendors determine what product features, like pricing, will retain and appeal to a customer base. (Abelow, col. 42, lines 33-39)

[claim 42] Abelow and Sammon in combination teach a merchandise planning and development system that operates via the internet as explained in the rejection of claim 30, but Abelow does not expressly disclose that the system includes a price

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determining unit. However, Abelow does consider pricing information in determining which factors will improve product sales. (Abelow: col. 87, lines 55-56).

Murcko teaches a system further comprising a selling price determining unit for determining the selling price of the merchandise based on various market factors (Fig. 12, col. 7, lines 40-60; col. 8, lines 65-col. 9, line 9; col. 28, lines 1-30). At the time of the Applicant's invention, would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the system of Abelow and Sammon in combination with the teaching of Murcko. As suggested by Murcko, one would have been motivated to include these features to provide an efficient pricing system and to encourage free market transactions, which may not otherwise occur (col. 7, lines 41-45)

Abelow, Sammon and Murcko in combination teach a merchandise planning and development system including a price-determining unit, which is sensitive to market factors as explained above. Furthermore, Murcko discloses that the pricing method may be used in combination with other pricing mechanisms such as retail or auctioning systems (col. 8, lines 63-col. 9, line1), but Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not specifically disclose the details of the auctioning method and further do not disclose that the method evaluates auction results.

Barzalai discloses system for collecting bids and auctioning merchandise comprising:

a step of auctioning new merchandise to be released corresponding to the merchandise information through said network among said many and unspecified customers; and (Figure 5; col. 12, lines 39-45; col. 13, lines 8-25)

determining the selling price of the new merchandise on the basis of the auction result by said auction step. (Figure 5; col. 13, lines 8-25; col. 16, lines 24-45—e.g. determines when, where, and which price ranges are most popular and allows these factors to influence sales/winning bid decisions)

At the time of the Applicant's invention it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the system of Abelow, Sammon, Murcko in combination with the teaching of Barzalai. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include these features to include benchmarking probes to help vendors determine what product features, like pricing, will retain and appeal to a customer base. (Abelow, col. 42, lines 33-39)

10. Claims 51-54 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko, Jr. in further view of Anonymous, "Fresh Cargo Brand Is Renamed".

[claims 51-54] Abelow and Sammon teach an Internet-implemented system and method for allowing consumers to participate in the product design process as explained in the rejection of claim 30. Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not expressly disclose that the system/method allow users to vote for the name of a product. However, systems and methods which allow consumers to select or vote on product names or logos were well-known at the time of the Applicant's invention, as evidenced by the teachings of the Fresh Cargo Brand Is Renamed" article.

Furthermore, at the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one

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of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method/system of Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination to allow consumers to provide feedback on the name of a product via the Internet. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature to ensure that corporations interact with customers to provide occasional product improvements when needed to meet sales and revenue objectives. (col. 7, lines 1-9)

Response to Arguments

11. Applicant's arguments filed 12/19/08 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

(A) The Applicant argues that the Applicant's invention distinguishes over the prior art because the prior art only allows the user to provide opinions on products while they are being used.

Also, as currently amended, the recited language part of an intended use clause used to describe the type of merchandise planning information which was gathered. In other words, in exemplary claim 30, the current claim language recites "the display unit further displaying an inquiry input screen ***into which the customers input...***" There is no positive recitation that customers actually perform the steps recited or that the data claimed is ever displayed or that the manner in which the data is gathered ever impacts the method(s) is/are performed. (See the 112, 2nd paragraph rejection)

Moreover, descriptions of the type of information in the currently claimed method are non-functional descriptive material and have been treated as such in the newly provided rejections.

(B) Applicant argues that there is not requirement that there be an “inputting step...”

In response, it is noted that claim 30 recites an intended use phrase regarding a “displaying an inquiry input screen...”. Later, the claim references receiving ... *the* opinion information input by the customers.” Without a positive recitation of the customers inputting data, the claim language presents an antecedent basis issue.

Claim 30 recites the limitation "receiving ...*the* opinion information input by the customers." There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim. The claim does not recite a step of “inputting opinion information by the customers.”

(C) Applicant argues the newly added CAD design feature.

In response, this newly added limitation had been addressed with additional citations for applicant's consideration.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure:

Matsuzaki et al (US 5357439A)--discloses the use of CAD in custom design and redesign.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to RACHEL L. PORTER whose telephone number is (571)272-6775. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 9:30-6:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, (Christopher) Luke Gilligan can be reached on (571) 272-6770. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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